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ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
SOUTH CAROLINA
COMMISSION
FOR THE BLIND

FOR THE
FISCAL YEAR 1973-1974



Printed Under the Direction of the
State Budget and Control Board

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The Honorable John C. West
Governor of South Carolina
Columbia, South Carolina

November 15, 1974

Dear Governor West:

The South Carolina Commission for the Blind is justly proud of the services that it has provided blind and visually impaired citizens of South Carolina during the Fiscal Year 1973-1974. This annual report reflects the progress made in carrying out the recommendations during a period of self-study. These positive changes are significant and will have carry-over value in the years to come.

Your support of the Commission is especially gratifying to the governing Board and the Administration. We look with optimism to the years ahead and pledge that we will not be satisfied until each and every citizen that falls under the jurisdiction of the Agency is served expeditiously, effectively, and with care.

Respectfully submitted,
Henry F. Watts
Executive Director

COMMISSION

Mr. Harry J. Haynsworth Columbia
Chairman
Mr. Samuel L. Zimmerman Greenville
Mr. Eugene Abrams Anderson
Mrs. T. E. Barham Columbia
Mr. A. Peter Anselmo Florence

ADMINISTRATION

The South Carolina Commission for the Blind (SCCB) is governed by a five-member Board appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. Policies are established by the Board and carried out by the Executive Director with the assistance of a Medical Advisory Committee. Also, the administrative unit maintains finance and accounting, public information, personnel, data processing, and a register of all known blind persons in the state. All of these functions are supervised by the Executive Director.

An important change has taken place during the year in that staff stability has been made possible by improved business practices, better supervision, improved salaries and working conditions. Resignations were far below the national and state averages. The Commission experienced an approximate 16.5% turnover rate during FY '74 compared with 42% the previous year; whereas, the national average for FY '74 was 33.2% and the state average was 25%.

In summary, the total number of reclassifications, new positions and requests for upgrading totaled 55 employees out of the 119 approved slots, which means that 46% of the staff have been affected in a positive way.

Work was begun to revamp and modernize the agency's data system, and Federal participation was assured. A new Cost Allocation Plan was implemented which allowed SCCB to use more Federal funds and to spread administrative cost throughout the various departments. This has had a positive effect on the rehabilitation program budget by placing ad-

ministrative cost for non-vocational rehabilitation personnel under Administration.

The Director negotiated cooperative agreements with the Department of Education and the State Library. These agreements, along with others now being formulated, are a part of the Commission's priorities to establish better working relationships with other agencies.

The Administration recognizes the fact that the quality of services delivered by an agency is directly related to the degree of experience and professional training of employees responsible for their delivery; therefore, in-service training and conference participation were sharply increased. A large percentage of SCCB's employees representing all divisions received specialized training under the auspices of The University of South Carolina, South Carolina State College, The Citadel, College of Charleston and Virginia Commonwealth University. Many employees received graduate credit which applied to their field in obtaining an advanced degree and specialized courses on the graduate level. Many staff members were sent to seminars in and out of state designed to add to the employees' knowledge of new techniques of working with the blind and visually impaired and to help SCCB to develop new programs of service.

One of the highlights of FY '74 was the enactment of legislation that permitted SCCB to service clients in the Vocational Rehabilitation Division who have progressive eye disorders that will lead to blindness. This action enabled SCCB to take appropriate measures that would enhance a client's rehabilitation potential by early intervention.

PREVENTION OF BLINDNESS

The Prevention of Blindness Department has more clients than any other department of the South Carolina Commission for the Blind (SCCB), and much progress was made towards expediting the delivery of services. For instance, new pathological clinics were set up in Aiken and at the State School for the Deaf and the Blind, and establishment of a clinic in Orangeburg was well underway. With these additions, SCCB

has been able to administer ophthalmological examinations on a timely basis.

An agreement was made with the South Carolina Lions Sight Conservation Association to co-sponsor a mobile eye screening van. The Lions purchased the van and screening equipment and SCCB provided the technician and driver. This unit travels the state and gives free eye screening to the public for visual acuity and glaucoma.

Staff has been upgraded in terms of relative position within the agency. Another change which has taken place is the updating of the Blind Register. Once it has been made current, the Register will be computerized for quarterly or semi-annual review.

There were fewer surgeries sponsored during FY '74 than in the previous year, from 622 in FY '73 to 566 for FY '74. This was due to the referral of more cases to the Rehabilitation Division and also the sponsorship of surgery by other programs, such as Title XIX Medicaid and Medicare. Of all eye conditions, cataracts accounted for the greatest number of operations. There were 275 cataract surgeries sponsored.

Glaucoma operations during the twelve-month period came to 21, and there were 1,333 persons listed on the Glaucoma Register. Emergency operations increased from 51 for the previous year to 63 for FY '74. Enucleations accounted for eight operations, after which the patients were fitted with prosthesis.

Strabismus operations for children totaled 55, and other conditions which necessitated surgery—such as irreversible pathologies—came to 144.

During the fiscal year, the Prevention of Blindness Department sponsored 2,367 eye examinations by eye specialists. Visual aids, such as glasses, contact lenses and prosthesis, were provided as a direct result of statewide screening. The department purchased 880 visual aids for patients it sponsored.

Total eye re-examinations amounted to 1,675 and there were 1,107 glaucoma re-checks. Complete medical examinations

were given to 65 clients, and 36 clients received medication on a regular basis.

As of June 30, 1974, there were 3,236 totally blind persons listed on the Blind Register and 2,948 persons were listed as partially sighted for a total of 6,184 persons listed as legally blind. The reduction of the total number of persons listed by the SCCB Register is a result of adjusted figures following a revamped register. This figure is not meant to represent the actual number of blind persons in the State. Reliable statistics are not available at this time. It is estimated, however, that the register represents approximately two-thirds of the blind population in South Carolina. Total funds expended during the year came to \$340,141.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

Of all the South Carolina Commission for the Blind (SCCB) Divisions, Vocational Rehabilitation has undergone the most change. Beginning with decentralizing authority, providing intense training of Vocational Rehabilitation staff and realigning responsibility, the program moved rapidly during FY '74 toward its goal of reaching more blind and severely visually impaired clients. Better rehabilitation services provided by this Division during the twelve month period resulted in significant increases in a number of areas.

With an adjusted goal of 220 rehabilitants, SCCB had 254 rehabilitants which gave the Agency 115% of its projected goal for FY '74. This ranked SCCB first in Region IV in the percentage of goal achieved toward the rehabilitation of its clients. Also, there was a significant increase in the number of new referrals over the previous year. As of June 30, 1974, the total active caseload was 1,304.

The Agency achieved 109% of its goal for Public Assistance (PA) rehabilitants, another category in which the agency ranked first in the Region. The goal for FY '74 for disabled PA clients to be rehabilitated was 65, and at the end of the year the Agency had 71 PA rehabilitants.

SCCB showed a 41% increase for FY '74 over the previous fiscal year in the number of rehabilitants. In addition, there

was a 163% increase in the number of PA rehabilitants over FY '73. In both categories, SCCB not only lead Region IV in the percentage of increase, but also was the highest in the nation.

Of SCCB's 254 rehabilitants, 238 or 93.7% were severely disabled. The Agency was highest in Region IV in this category. This figure is particularly significant since the Rehabilitation Services Administration will be using the severely disabled caseload ratio as an additional guide in determining Agency scope and the quality of its services.

The ultimate goal of Vocational Rehabilitation is to have every employable blind person in the state working at his maximum potential. Rehabilitation saves the state by turning tax consumers into tax payers. Whether a rehabilitant is placed in productive employment or returns home as a competent homemaker, the objective is the same in all cases—to assist the blind person to realize his full potential and to gain or regain his or her independence.

At the Adult Adjustment and Training Center, the number of blind and visually impaired clients who received training totaled 77, a 35% increase over the previous fiscal year. As of June 30, 1974, seventeen clients were awaiting entrance as compared with two at the same time last year.

New and innovative programs were begun at the Training Center which exemplified the SCCB's leadership in the Region. Such programs included Horticulture for the Blind, Visual Arts for the Blind, and the groundwork was laid for a Vocational Evaluation Unit which utilizes work evaluation techniques never before used by any agency exclusively for the blind.

Making a concerted effort to bring services to blind persons who, for any number of reasons, could not come to SCCB for training, two Mobile Home Teaching Units were designed and began to operate in the Piedmont and Lowcountry. The job of a Home Teacher and a Mobility Instructor is to travel to homes and provide individualized instruction where needed. A good beginning was made to fully implement this concept in FY '75.

A specialized area of Vocational Rehabilitation is Youth Services, which served pupil-clients over fourteen years of age. Youth Counselors worked closely with students, parents and educational personnel through high school, and helped them set vocational or higher education goals. Selected blind students from schools statewide were given assistance for enrollment in technical education programs as well as colleges and universities. Plans were also made for students to attend a pre-college summer program at the University of South Carolina, called SET (Students in Educational Transition). At the close of FY '74, the three Youth Counselors had a total of 213 clients. Some 70 students were attending college and 21 were in technical schools.

During FY '74, SCCB established a special program to work with clients who were found to be eligible under Social Security's new Supplemental Security Income Program and those clients who were allowed under Social Security for disability benefits which come from Social Security's Trust Fund Program. This was done by assigning counselors who specialize in serving Social Security Trust Fund clients.

Other highlights of Vocational Rehabilitation for FY '74 included the establishment of two Vocational Rehabilitation Area Supervisor positions and a Training Center Supervisor position. For the first time the Division developed a procedural manual for use by the staff. In addition, some of the latest communications equipment for work with the blind was purchased. During the year, for example, SCCB bought two Optacons for instruction and sent a member of the teaching staff to Palo Alto, California to gain the necessary training to teach its use to the blind. The Opatcon is an electronic device which allows a blind person, once he has received extensive training with it, to read printed material without having to know Braille or to get assistance from a sighted person.

At the end of the fiscal year, there were SCCB staff located in major population centers of the state who also served all other counties on an itinerant basis in Greenville, Anderson, Spartanburg, Aiken, Sumter, Florence, Rock Hill, Greenwood, Cedar Spring, Walterboro, Charleston, Conway and Orangeburg. From these offices and facilities the total range of rehabilitation services were offered.

DISABILITY DETERMINATION UNIT

The South Carolina Commission for the Blind (SCCB) is the only agency for the blind in the nation with a Disability Determination Unit that adjudicates claims for Social Security benefits where blindness is alleged as the primary disability. Those individuals who meet the level of severity prescribed by law are recommended for an allowance. Those who don't are denied. Regardless of whether the applicant is recommended and allowed by the Social Security Administration, all applicants and beneficiaries are referred by the SCCB Adjudicator to a SCCB Rehabilitation Counselor specializing in Social Security Income Trust Fund rehabilitation services.

During the past fiscal year, the Disability Determination Unit received 512 claims for Social Security Disability Benefits and Supplemental Security Income Benefits. Decisions were rendered on 505 cases. The new Federally-operated Supplemental Security Income program, which began January 1, 1974, replaced the Federal-State programs of public assistance payments to the blind or disabled. Thus, the marked increase in the disability caseload for this year.

BUSINESS ENTERPRISES

The Business Enterprises Program (BEP) experienced a good year, as gross sales topped a million and a quarter dollars. With the goal of increasing the opportunity for a blind person to achieve economic independence and productive employment, major emphasis was placed on the acquisition, maintenance and supervision of blind-operated Business Enterprises (vending stands) throughout the State.

By June 30, BEP listed 60 Business Enterprises located in State institutions, office buildings, technical schools, federal installations and private industries. This is a net increase of two Enterprises over the same time last year.

Construction had begun on three new Enterprises by the end of FY '74, and plans were underway to remodel at least three additional Enterprises.

Of the 60 managers (operators), 26 were totally blind, 33 were partially sighted and one was sighted. All persons served

by BEP must meet the legal definition of blindness according to the Randolph-Sheppard Act. Sighted managers are occasionally used on a temporary basis.

Gross income for all Business Enterprises was \$1,274,689.00, a 30.5% increase over the previous year. This ranked the SCCB Business Enterprises Program highest among the eight states in Region IV in the percentage of increase of gross income. Managers collected an average monthly income of \$654.00, an increase per month of \$139.00 over FY '73. Also, the average annual earnings of managers increased 26.8% over last year, amounting to \$7,848 per manager.

During the fiscal year, BEP moved forward in providing better services to managers. With gross sales on the increase, new Enterprises under construction and the continuing remodeling of existing Enterprises, much progress can be noted toward updating the entire Program. As a result, managers derived a greater net income, enjoyed better working conditions, and more managers were promoted to larger Enterprises than ever before.

HOME INDUSTRIES

The Home Industries Program provides work and supplemental income for homebound blind persons who cannot compete in the labor market. Raw materials for producing craft items such as stuffed toys, mats, rugs, tote bags, artificial flowers, shawls and crocheted items are shipped to the homes of the workers. They return the finished products to SCCB's retail and wholesale outlet, Blind Craft, for inspection and marketing. All sales and profits are returned to the person making the crafts.

Not only was there a wider variety of items sold at Blind Craft during FY '74, but also the number of walk-in customers increased due to a change in the location of the sales and inspection center. In addition, the out-of-state market continued to grow, bringing in some \$2,700 more in wholesale shipments over the year before. Craft items are marketed in wholesale shipments which go to customers in North Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Kentucky, Tennessee, Illinois and New

York. All items, whether sold at the store or out of state, carry the label "Made by the Blind of South Carolina."

At the end of the fiscal year, 42 clients were receiving payment for their work with Home Industries. The average monthly payment per worker was \$25.86, and there were nine client consignees.

COMPREHENSIVE BLIND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

In the fall of 1973, the Division of Children's Services underwent complete reorganization which resulted in good progress towards better service delivery. Three highly qualified Consultants were hired and revision of districts and reassignment of client loads was completed. The approach taken during the year was to provide services to blind children and their parents where they were unattainable elsewhere. These services augmented and complemented the services of all agencies working with blind children.

The Consultants worked to get blind children started on the right path to a full life and to help them recognize ways to compensate for their visual loss. This was accomplished by providing on an individual basis evaluation and educational assessments, including psychological and neurological when necessary. Also provided were workshops for children, parents, teachers and administrators which were designed to contribute to skill development, cooperative attitudes and improved total adjustment in an effort to maximize the potential and productive capability of the blind child.

Optical aids and devices for visually impaired children were offered, along with talking book records, textbooks recorded on tape, and specially made educational games and developmental toys.

At the end of the year, there were 121 clients from the Piedmont, 77 from the Midlands and 62 from the Coastal Plains, making a total of 260 blind children being served by this Division.

SPECIAL SERVICE LIBRARY

The South Carolina Commission for the Blind's (SCCB) Special Service Library improved greatly during the year,

having moved from position 40 to position 14 in the nation in comparison with the volumes and types of services offered. Improved services for FY '74 included the leasing of a large print machine which enabled SCCB to provide necessary materials on a timely basis for partially sighted clients. Other special equipment purchased has been time-compressor tape playback machines, variable speech machines, several visual enlargement camera/monitor systems, and a high speed cassette tape duplicator. All these have allowed the Library to move rapidly forward in providing quality services.

Also, the new cooperative agreement with the South Carolina State Library allowed SCCB to share responsibility with that agency in identifying more persons who might be eligible, and to advertise jointly in services that both agencies render.

At the conclusion of FY '74, the Library had 2,281 Talking Book Machines in use. During the fiscal year alone, 103 cassette recorders/players were issued, as compared with 23 such units at the same time the previous year. In use at the year's end were 79 cassette recorders, 85 cassette players, and 23 tape recorders.

Making heavy use of special equipment during the year, the Library Brailled 15,285 pages, a total more than double that of FY '73. Some 2,670 tape reels recorded exceeded by almost a thousand the output of the year before. The number of Braille pages duplicated by the Thermoform process came to 7,165, also a substantial increase, and tape duplicating amounted to 1,345 open reels which were sent out to clients. This number also was more than double the total of FY '73. Cassette tapes duplicated totaled 402, and there were 280 volumes of large print books produced. In terms of circulation, the Library accounted for 232 Talking Book titles, 547 Braille volumes, and 591 large print volumes.

The volunteer program conducted by SCCB proved to be of great help to the overall educational effort of the Commission. Eighty volunteers contributed some 6,000 man-hours on behalf of SCCB through its Special Service Library.

RADIO TALKING BOOK SERVICE

The Commission for the Blind Radio Talking Book Service (RTBS) continued expanding its daily programming during FY '74, and solid groundwork was laid towards this special service becoming a statewide radio service for the blind.

The South Carolina ETV Radio Network worked closely with the Commission in formulating plans to set up a central studio in Columbia which will allow the station for the blind to reach all blind South Carolinians during FY '75. In addition, a survey of the blind population to determine audience potential was planned.

RTBS, which operated from the Greenville office during the year, broadcasts programs to blind citizens especially designed to meet their needs. A major aim of the sub-channel's programming is to keep its listeners up-to-date on current affairs at all levels. The South Carolina RTBS is the third station in the nation to broadcast exclusively for blind people and is the second nationwide to be initiated by a state agency.

Programming includes in-depth reading of newspapers when they appear, and also reading of current news magazines, educational materials for the blind, a book of the week, interviews with successful blind people, a children's hour, travelogue, consumer tips, and descriptions of programs and services in which blind people may enroll.

The service is aired over FM sub-channel and can be picked up by specially designed receivers made available through the Commission to qualified listeners. RTBS currently has an estimated 375 listeners who pick the programs up on the 200 receivers already distributed.

SPECIAL SERVICES STORE

The Special Services Store provides a valuable service to many blind South Carolinians. Using this service, a blind person can purchase over-the-counter special aids and devices that formerly had to be mail ordered.

A wide variety of items stocked and sold at cost include Braille watches, Braille games, Braille paper and writing de-

vices, white canes of various lengths, tape recorders, optical aids and Braille Bibles, among others.

The Special Services Store changed locations during the year to provide greater accessibility to walk-in blind customers. It was relocated in the Blind Craft Store at 1222 Hampton Street in Columbia. Formerly it was in the Commission's administrative building on an upper-level floor in the downtown area.

The store serves two major functions. First, various aids and appliances are stocked for purchase by legally blind South Carolinians. Also, these items are frequently bought by certain Commission Divisions for use in serving their clients. The second function of the Special Services Store is to house various supply items for classes held at the Training Center, such as art supplies and communications and mobility training equipment.

The first complete fiscal year for the Special Services Department ended June 30, 1973, during which time sales amounted to \$16,034.36. A revolving fund is maintained for this program, and as items are sold, new orders are placed to replenish the stock.

SOURCE OF FUNDS

Fiscal Year 1973-1974

1. FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Receipts (Vocational Rehabilitation, Trust
Funds and Disability Determination)\$1,427,352

2. STATE GOVERNMENT

General Appropriation Act\$1,192,064

TOTAL — ALL FUNDS\$2,619,416

EXPENDITURES

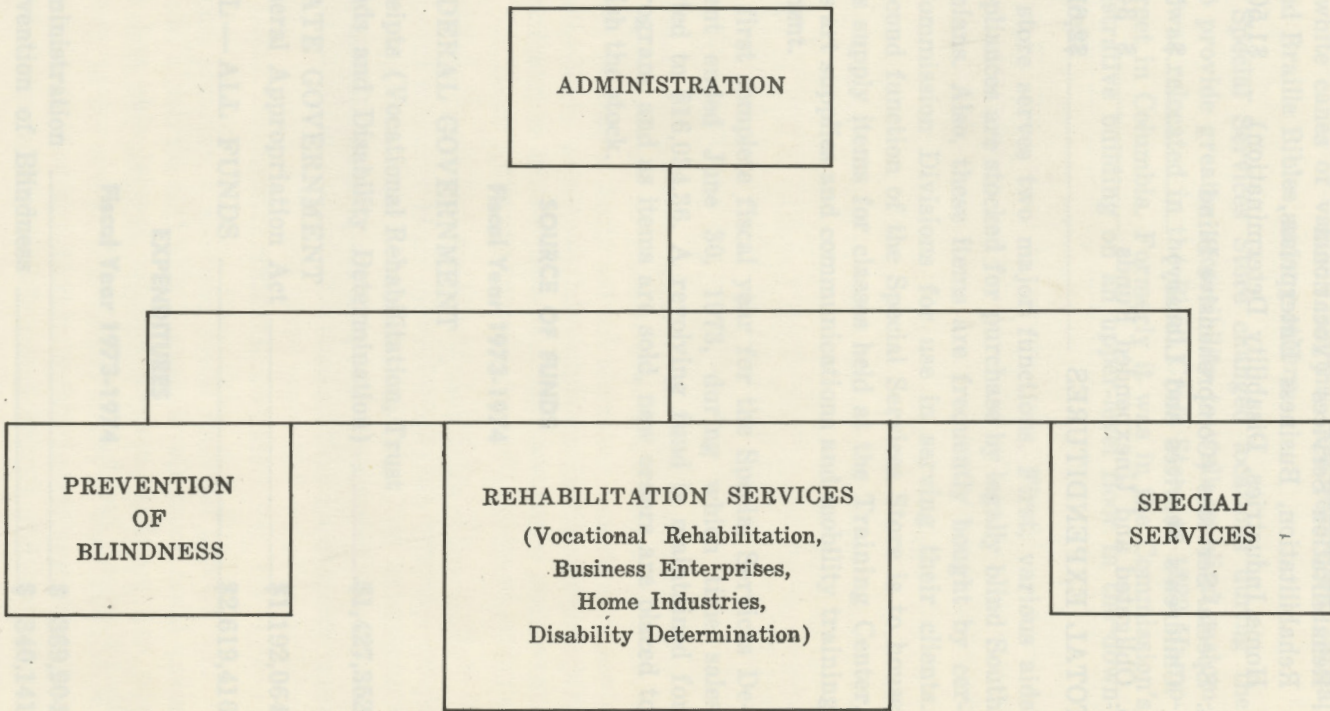
Fiscal Year 1973-1974

1. Administration\$ 369,904

2. Prevention of Blindness\$ 340,141

3. Rehabilitation Services (Vocational Rehabilitation, Business Enterprises, Home Industries, Disability Determination)	\$1,504,432
4. Special Services (Comprehensive Blind Children's Services and Library)	\$ 57,423
5. Obligated and Unexpended Funds	\$ 347,516
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$2,619,416

COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND



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